

# Advertising translation from Skopos theory

**Zhimeng Zhu**

Zhimeng Zhu Shandong University of Science and Technology, Qingdao, China  
Corresponding author: 1051697920@qq.com

**Abstract:** With the development of market economy, advertising has become an indispensable marketing tool as a way to convey information to the public. As a kind of "inducement" text, the purpose of translation of advertisement is more explicit. The traditional translation methods of "Faithfulness", "Expressiveness" and "elegance" alone can no longer serve the advertising text well. The "Skopos theory" proposed by German scholar Vermeer believes that the purpose of translation determines the translation method, which is a better guidance for the translation of the text type of advertisement. This article will analyze and study the translation of Chinese-English advertisements from the perspective of translation Skopos theory.

**Keywords:** Skopos theory, Translation of advertisement

## 1. Introduction

Skopos theory was first proposed by Vermeer in 1978 in his book *Framework for a General Translation Theory*, "Skopos" is a Greek word meaning "purpose". "Skopos" is a Greek word meaning "purpose". The basic approach is to apply the concept of "Skopos" to translation theory. According to the Skopos theory, the end justifies the means of the translation.[1] The translator's frame of reference in the whole translation process should not be the original text and function emphasized by the reciprocal translation theory, but one or several communicative functions to be achieved by the translated text in the translated culture, and the primary principle should be to realize the intended function of the translated text in the translated culture. The Skopos theory provides sufficient theoretical basis for breaking the shackles of the traditional translation principles of "faith" and "fidelity". Especially in today's fast-changing development, against the background of the demand for translation pluralism, the Skopos theory has an extremely important position for guiding certain specific genres, especially advertising texts.

## 2. The three principles of Skopos theory

The skopos rule is the most basic of the three. It means that all translation behaviors are guided by the purpose, that is, "the result determines the way". The coherence rule refers to the coherence within the text, that is, the readability and acceptability of the translation. The faithfulness rule, also known as interlingual coherence, requires translation activities to coherently transmit the original text. And faithfulness is determined by the translator's understanding of the original text and the purpose of manipulating the translation.[2]

### 2.1 Skopos rule

According to the skopos theory, the primary principle to be followed by all translation acts is the "skopos principle", which is also called the "result-determining process principle", that is, the translation purpose to be achieved by the translation act determines the whole process of the translation act. The translation should be able to function in the context and culture of the target language in the way that the recipient of the translation expects. In fact, the purpose of translation is basically divided into three aspects, the basic purpose of the translator, the communicative purpose of the translated text and the purpose to be achieved by using some special translation means. Therefore, different types of texts, and the communicative purposes to be achieved by different texts, are, in the view of translation Skopos theory, the primary factors that inspire and even determine which translation strategies and translation methods to use.

## **2.2 Coherence rule**

The translation must meet the standard of Intra-textual coherence, which means that the target language is readable and acceptable, and can be understood by the receiver and make sense in the culture of the translated language and the communicative context in which the translation is used. The realization of intra-linguistic coherence is directly related to the realization of the communicative function of the translation and indirectly affects the translator's choice of translation strategy. Coherence is the basis of sentences, articles and advertising language. If the author of an article lacks coherence, the translator will not understand the author's intention. Similarly, if the translator lacks coherence in translation, he or she will not be able to translate a good article.

## **2.3 Faithfulness rule**

The faithfulness rule in skopos theory refers to the need for a certain degree of inter-textual coherence in the translation, and it is also the principle of "faithfulness" and "elegance", which means that the translator should be faithful and be responsible for the original text while accurately expressing the basic ideas of the author. However, it is important to note that the degree and form of faithfulness in skopos theory is determined by the purpose of the target language and the translator's understanding of the original text. That is, the faithfulness and coherence rules are ultimately subordinated to the principle of purpose.

## **3. The Characteristics of Advertising and Its Translation Strategies**

The famous American Marketing Association (AMA) defines advertising as follows: Advertising is non-personal communication of information usually by paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products service or ideas by identified sponsors through the various media It can be seen that advertising translation is different from literature, technology, and other type of translations in that it is a variety of highly refined information, using artistic techniques, through a variety of media spread to the public, in order to strengthen or change people's ideas, and ultimately lead to people's behavior things and activities. Advertising differs from general mass propoganda and communication activities, which are mainly shown in:

- 1) Advertising is a kind of communication and marketing tool, which belongs to a part of marketing and sale. Its basic principle is to a certain commodity information, on the basis of not deviating from the basic information, with appropriate selection, description, rendering and processing, by the production or management of the commodity (advertisers) to a group of specific users and consumers;
- 2) As a communicative activities, advertisements are persuasive in nature, because it has a certain commercial nature, and most of them have a clear purpose-to persuade consumers to buy or use their products and services.
- 3) The best effect of advertising is to leave a deep impression, to get the subconscious recognition of consumers, and to stimulate the desire to buy. The essence of this kind of marketing requires the advertisement to be true to the language, short and concise, catchy, and exaggerated when necessary to leave a deep impression.

Advertising translation is not a purely imitative act of faithfully transferring the original message into the target language, but rather a process of actively recreating the translation. In advertising translation, the translator should be concerned with the question of whether the intended function of the translated text in the target language can be achieved. There are many factors that affect its realization, one important point being that consumers of different cultures have different values. As a result, advertising styles may also vary according to geographical and cultural backgrounds. When translating advertisements, translators should pay special attention to understanding the advertising norms of the target language culture, so that the translation style can meet the taste of the target language readers. In other words, the translation of advertisements should follow the language and culture of the target language, and only in this way can we ensure that the translation of advertisements can achieve its intended purpose and promote consumers' purchase. According to the above-mentioned skopos theory, and combined with the characteristics of the advertisement text, the advertisement translated by the translator can be considered a good translation as long as it can achieve the purpose of the advertisement, bring into play the commercial value of the advertisement and its position in marketing, regardless of which translation method is used, what style the translation is translated into, or to what extent it is correct.

The particularity of commercial advertisement English translation is embodied in three aspects: language characteristics, cross-cultural communication and value function. First of all, commercial advertising the text should be short but informative, covering the features and selling points of the product, and artistic. Secondly, commercial advertisement translation belongs to cross-cultural communication, and different cultural backgrounds have different value orientations. Finally, the main function of commercial advertising is to display the properties of commodities, effectively introduce products to consumers, and stimulate their desire to buy. The particularity of commercial advertisement translation requires that, when translating commercial advertisements, translators should not only faithfully and accurately translate advertising information, cross the barrier between different cultures, satisfy the purpose and the consumer psychology and habits of the audience, but also achieve advertising promotion. The purpose of in this context, only relying on the translation standards of "fidelity" and "equivalence" cannot maximize the effect of advertising translation. Therefore, from the actual requirements and purposes of commercial English translation, Skopos theory can break through the limitations of traditional translation standards and provide new options and objectives for advertising translation.

In the skopos theory, the "principle of purpose" comes first, so it seems that "faithfulness" is only a reference principle for advertising translation, not a rigid standard. Therefore, in order to realize the purpose of the advertisement, we should adopt appropriate translation methods and strategies for the advertisement, not only word-for-word direct translation of the original text, but also appropriate recreation by different methods, such as free translation, amplification and omission.

#### **4. The guiding role of skopos theory for advertising translation**

Jia Wenbo points out, "Translation of advertisement is not just a matter of semantic equivalence, but also a kind of recreation to highlight the function of advertisement." Skopos theory introduces "behavior theory" into translation theory, and considers translation as an act of cross-cultural communication. Any act has its own purpose, and the purpose to be achieved by the act of translation determines the method and strategy to be adopted by the translation. On the basis of ensuring this function, we can use some other translation strategies to adjust the structure of the translation to ensure the loyalty and coherence of the translation [3]. Under the guidance of skopos theory and combined with the characteristics of advertising style, the following three methods are commonly used in advertising translation:

##### **4.1 Transliteration**

Transliteration is the process of making people pronounce words as if they were native English speakers. Transliteration is often used in the translation of brands and trademarks. When foreign brands enter the Chinese market, the first step is to translate the brand name into Chinese. The simplest and most direct way to translate brands and trademarks is transliteration, and for any brand, pronunciation is the most distinctive and intuitive sign, so transliteration can retain the rhythmic characteristics of foreign brands to the greatest extent, and is also conducive to oral communication among people with different language backgrounds. It is also more consistent with the principle of faithfulness in the three principles of skopos theory.

For example, Subway(it is translated into "Sai Baiwei"), a multinational fast food brand's advertisement, reads very similarly to the source text, which uses the transliteration method. The word "Sai" means "better than" and "superior to". The word "Baiwei" is an exaggeration. And the word "Sai Baiwei" means that the taste of this product is better than any other similar products. This translation not only retains the pronunciation of the original, but also cleverly uses the similarity of pronunciation to promote the brand. There are countless applications of phonetic transliteration in this genre, such as Google's Internet search engine Bing(Bi Ying), where the translator's creativity lies in translating the initials "B" and "ing" separately, taking the last two words of the idiom "You Qiu Bi Ying", which means that this search engine is all-encompassing and can answer all questions and requests.

Other example is Longines (Lang Qin). The two Chinese word paints a picture that the ticking of the watch hand is like a record of the tide of the tide of the sound of the piano, full of literary sense. In addition, the use of transliteration method can make the advertising slogan catchy and easy to recite. The word Wa Haha (Wahaha) is not only pronounced exactly the same, but the translation is playful and lively, like the laughter of children, and Supor (Su Bo Er) is harmonized with super, which means "excellent" in English.

#### **4.2 Literal translation method**

The literal translation method, that is, translating the source text directly, can basically achieve word-for-word translation. This translation method is generally used on the premise that there is no cultural difference between a certain sentence or a certain paragraph of the source text and the target text. And it is used to deal with some advertising slogans or headlines where the meaning of the original text is clearer and the syntactic structure is simpler, so that a complete literal direct translation can express both the surface meaning and the deeper meaning of the sentence.

For example, Breeze (Qing Feng) tissue, which directly translates the original meaning of the Chinese, without changing the premise of the brand name, but also adds to the meaning of "breeze" to the advertising audience. "Little Swan (Xiao Tianer)" washing machine brand, is translated as "Little Swan", because little swan has a sense of nobility and elegance, which is easy for westerners to accept. The translation of "Zi Jie Tiao Dong" into "byte dance" seems simple, but "byte" can clarify the nature of the company, that is, the nature of the network technology company. The word "dance" is enough to express the culture and characteristics of the company: to entertain and relax users.

There is also the phenomenon of literal translation in advertising slogans, for example, "Let's make things better." is translated into "Rang Wo Men Zuo De Geng Hao". The success of this advertisement lies precisely in the use of literal translation, which can fully show the characteristics of the original advertisement in terms of both form and content, and its short and friendly language is pleasing to people. From this, it can be seen that skopos theory does not exclude the traditional "faithfulness" criterion based on the principle of "faithfulness, elegance, and quality", but modifies and improves this criterion with "functionality". It requires the translator to take the purpose as the core when translating, and the other principles serve the purpose. As long as the purpose of translation can be achieved, any translation method can be used.

#### **4.3 Free translation method**

According to the American Advertising Association, advertising has three main functions: informative function, aesthetic function and vocative function. In order to achieve these three purposes, free translation is the most frequently mentioned translation method in advertising translation. Unlike literal translation, it does not translate word by word and sentence by sentence, but emphasizes the relative independence of the translation language system, which can reflect the cultural characteristics of the target language and meet its translation purpose as far as possible. In the translation of advertisements, due to the differences between Chinese and foreign cultures, most of the advertising statements and phrases do not use the literal translation method, at this time, the free translation becomes the primary choice, and the following advertising translation examples all use the translation method of free translation, so as to better achieve the purpose of advertising:

Example 1: Right is right, left is also right.

The translation is: Ni De Zuo You, Bu Wei Chan Pin Zuo You. The intent of the ad is that shows the extremely special symmetry of the Smartisan, which allows both right and left handed of users to use it without any problems. Understood literally, the right hand can be used when operating phone, and so can the left hand. However, if translated literally, not only does the target text seem boring, but it may even be incoherent or even awkward. However, the official translation of this sentence is very clever, as the word "right" has two meanings, namely "right" and "correct", which will make people confused when translating. The translation neatly avoids this point, neither asking a specific "right or left" question nor using the word "correct". The translator does not choose a literal direct translation, but chooses a free translation that can better express the idea of this text. So the target text not only fully explains the excellent performance of the product, but also is catchy, and the word "left or right" appears twice, which not only rhymes but also increases the memory point, and perfectly realizes the purpose of this advertisement translation wants to achieve.

Example 2: China railways High-speed, a moving Great Wall in the word! (China high-speed railway)

Translated as: China Gao Tie, Shi Jie Qi Ji !

This is an advertisement for China High Speed Rail, which is known for its speed. The original text uses the word "Great Wall", which would be confusing if translated directly as "Great Wall". The original text uses the rhetorical technique of metaphor, comparing the high-speed railway to the Great Wall, one of the well-known wonders of the world, to express that the speed of China's high-speed railway is as

miraculous as that of the Great Wall. In this case, we cannot adopt the direct translation method, but choose a new catchy and meaningful phrase after capturing the central idea of the text.

#### Example 3

- 1) The diamond is forever.
- 2) Good to the last drop.

These two English advertisements are simple in wording and structure, so if translated directly, they will lack beauty. According to the Chinese custom, the Chinese wording seeks for the rhyme of the sentence, the completeness of the content, and the short and concise structure. Therefore, the first sentence can be translated as: Zhuan Shi Heng Jiu Yuan, Yi Ke Yong Liu Chuan; the second sentence can be borrowed from the Chinese four-character idiom: Di Di Xiang Nong, Yi You Wei Jin.

#### Example 4

A friend in need is a friend indeed.

Translation: Sui Shen Xie Dai, You Bei Wu Huan, Sui Shen Xie Dai, You Jing Wu Xian.

This advertisement for quick-acting heart pills uses repetition and prose to highlight the benefits of the drug. The use of first rhyme makes the entire sentence seem fluent and cohesive. The English advertisement uses the English proverb, applying repetition and personification, comparing the heart-saving pill to a friend who is ready to give you a helping hand in times of trouble. The purpose of the translation is to convey that the medicine is fast, portable and reliable. The phrase "Sui Shen Xie Dai" indicates that the medicine is easy to carry, and the phrases "You Bei Wu Huan" and "You Jing Wu Xian" promote the reliability of the medicine, which completely fulfills the purpose of the translation.

## 5. Conclusion

As a genre of both practical and commercial value, advertising has a unique art form and linguistic characteristics. The main purpose of advertising is to raise the awareness of products and attract consumers so as to achieve the purpose of promoting sales. This element determines the trade-off between translation information and translation content in the translation. Due to the different cultural backgrounds and cognitive environments of the communicating parties, the reasoning and cognitive effects of the same text will be different. The emergence of purposive theory solves the problem in translation of advertising language, i.e., the contradiction between source language culture and target language culture. It provides a theoretical basis for the phenomenon of partial infidelity, addition, deletion and even rewriting in the translation process. Commercial advertisement is a kind of applied style with its own unique language characteristics, which requires translators to strengthen cross-cultural awareness in the translation process, and must be faithful to the source text, conform to the bilingual cultural thinking, and deliver the source text according to the nature and purpose of advertising translation. Different purposes use different methods, never one size fits all. Authentic and proper translation is helpful to promote the products served by the advertisement to the market, get the recognition of consumers, and maximize the economic benefits.

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